



Lambda Letters Project

June, 1993 Newsletter

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6212 Silverton Way, Carmichael, California 95608

Phone (916) 965-6851

Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual Issue

THANK YOU! THANK YOU!

Many of you responded very generously to the appeal for contributions which we made in our April Newsletter. We received a total of \$3,300 dollars from over 130 people. That included five contributions of \$100 and one \$500 contribution. In addition, Terry Sidie, of the Faces Bar in Sacramento, has agreed to match the \$500 contribution. We will send our personal letter of thanks to each of you who contributed as soon as possible. Please be patient with us as producing these letters must be done along with the regular work of our volunteers.

Thank you so much for this renewed vote of confidence in the Lambda Letters Project. We can't begin to tell you how much your support and encouragement mean to us. We consider it a privilege to serve you and to help you express your views to legislators and other public officials.

Unfortunately, the annual Lambda Letters auction was much less profitable this year than in prior years. We grossed about \$470 instead of the \$1,500 that we typically earned in prior year's auctions. Your generous support in April means that we will be OK for the time being, but we will need your continuing financial support in the future.

We have been working hard on lifting the ban, as well as on the important women's and AIDS issues. By the end of March, we had already collected over 10,000 letters. As a result, our costs continue to mount. Please give generously whenever you can.

At any rate, thank you for all your support and encouragement.

WRITE TO THE HOUSE ARMED SERVICES' COMMITTEE

Please write to the member of the House Armed Services' Committee shown on the enclosed sample letter. Our other members will be writing to the other members of that Committee.

Urge the Congressman to change the focus of the hearings away from the barracks and bathrooms and towards the damaging effects of the military's current policy towards lesbians, gays and bisexuals. Such discrimination hurts both the military and the individuals who are discriminated against. For example:

The military's policy excludes competent people who wish to serve their country. Many of those discharged for homosexuality have been highly decorated service people.

The current policy wastes resources. A Government Accounting Office (GAO) report indicates that the government spent \$500 million in the past ten years training, discharging and replacing homosexual service members. That money could be spent better improving the combat readiness of the military.

The policy has a disparate effect on women. Department of Defense records show that women are three times more likely than men to be discharged for homosexuality.

The current policy implicitly condones harassment and physical abuse of lesbian, gay and bisexual service members. Such fighting among service people damages good order and discipline in the armed services.

The military's lobbying efforts in support of retaining the current policy, in opposition to the expressed will of its Commander in Chief, undermines our cherished tradition of civilian control of the military.

Urge the congressman to support the President and support an end to the military's ban on lesbians, gays and bisexuals in the military.

INVOLUNTARY HIV TESTING LET'S SAY NO TO A FOOT IN THE DOOR

State Senator Newton Russell (R) has recently introduced SB 627 which would allow for the involuntary testing of a person's blood if a physician believes that there has been a potential HIV exposure of a healthcare worker to that patient's blood. This bill is opposed by both the California Medical Association and the California Nurses' Association. It goes against the established provisions of SB 1070 (Thompson) which the governor signed into law in 1991.

As a result of SB 1070, the State Department of Health Services established the Patient Protection Act Working Group which has developed appropriate guidelines and recommended against involuntary or mandatory testing of a "healthcare worker or patient who may have been exposed to (HIV) through occupational accidents." Rather, counseling of the person should be mandated and testing, if appropriate, should be voluntary. In reality, if asked, most patients will agree to be tested. If they refuse, the most professionally accepted action is to assume that the patient is HIV positive and act accordingly. SB 627 has no provisions for action in many situations, such as, if the patient refuses to be tested, the patient dies before giving consent to be tested, or the patient cannot be located. If it passes, and is signed into law, the bill's provisions will become a major foot in the door for future bills which could mandate involuntary HIV testing under many other circumstances. California has a long-standing commitment to voluntary testing as a cornerstone of its HIV policies. Introducing exceptions to this commitment, however well intentioned, opens the door to repressive, discriminatory and medically unfounded proposals. Allowing for the involuntary testing of a patient's blood leads to the eventual involuntary testing of physicians, nurses, dentists, and possibly even first responders.

POOR WOMEN HAVE THE RIGHT TO CHOOSE

Congress will soon vote on the Appropriations Bill for Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education. In 1976, the Hyde Amendment was enacted as part of this bill and it prohibited the use of Federal Medicaid funds for low-income women's abortion services. The only exception allowed was when the life of the mother would be endangered if the fetus were carried to term. Proposals to allow Medicaid to pay for abortions in cases of rape and incest have been hotly contested in the past, and the proposal to lift the ban entirely is certain to intensify debate this year.

Prior to the Hyde amendment, Medicaid coverage of abortion varied from state to state. Currently, 12 states permit public funding for abortions for low-income women and eight states fund abortion in cases of rape or fetal deformity while several other states have adopted their own policy of funding abortions for the poor.

At issue here is the right of all women, regardless of socio-economic status, to have an abortion. Women should have the right to choose the course of their lives, whether they be rich or poor. Opponents of lifting the Hyde amendment are against forcing pro-life taxpayers to pay for something they see as murder. However, taxpayers do not get to decide how their tax dollars are spent. Pacifists, for example, are not allowed to choose whether or not their tax dollars are spent on the military.

It is time we put an end to the 12 year old ban against the rights of the poor. A similar bill, the Treasury Post Office Appropriations Bill, seeks approval of the Federal Employees Health Benefits Plan. This plan would fund abortions for low-income Federal employees.

Will you be attending the Pride Festival in Fresno, Sacramento or San Francisco? Can you spare an hour or two to help out at the Lambda Letters Booth at one of these events? We need volunteers to help staff the booths and persuade people to sign our letters. Some volunteers may also use our legislative directories to identify the legislators who represent the people who sign our letters at the Pride Festivals. If you can help for an hour or two at any of these events, please call us at (916) 965-6851. The schedule of these Pride Festivals is as follows:

Fresno - Sunday, June 13th

Sacramento - Saturday, June 19th

San Francisco - Sunday, June 27th

PLEASE HELP

We urge you to make five copies of the letter on the other side of this page and to get five of your friends to sign the letters. Please return the signed letters to us. You may need extra postage if you return these letters in the same envelope as your regular letters.

The letter urges Congressional support of HR 25, The Freedom of Choice Act of 1993. This bill, if passed, would be landmark legislation that would, once and for all, protect the right to choose of every woman in America. HR 25 makes Roe v Wade the law of the land. If it passed, the states would no longer be able to whittle away a woman's right to choose by enacting state legislation that is more restrictive than the original Roe v Wade Supreme Court decision. HR 25 would pre-empt all such state laws.

HR 25 has been approved by all the relevant committees in the House of Representatives. It is expected to come up for a vote on the floor of the House in Late June or early July. This bill must pass! We urge you to help ensure its passage by copying the letter on the reverse side of this page and getting your friends to sign it. Send the letters to us as soon as possible and we will get them to Congress before the crucial vote.

Print Name

Street Address

City, State & Zip Code

June 15, 1993

The Hon.
The U. S. House of Representatives
Washington, D. C. 20515

Dear Representative

I urge you to support HR 25, The Freedom of Choice Act (Edwards) which will probably be voted on by the House of Representatives shortly. I ask you to do all that is in your power to assure that HR 25 passes in its original form and without amendment. This legislation, if passed, would, effectively codify the Supreme Court's Roe v Wade decision of 1973 and would guarantee the right to abortion for all women in this nation.

I am pro-choice. I believe firmly that the woman, and no one else, should have the final say in whether or not she will carry a pregnancy to full term. Numerous polls have repeatedly shown that the majority of Americans are pro-choice. I believe that George Bush's opposition to a woman's right to choice was a major factor in his loss to Bill Clinton.

Laws prohibiting abortion have an unfair effect on poor women. If abortion is illegal in a particular state or nation, wealthy women simply go to where it is legal to have an abortion. Poor women can't afford to. Laws requiring time limits between the time a woman requests an abortion and the time it is performed also act unfairly on poor women, especially in states with few abortion facilities. In these states, women must often travel to the city in which the facility is found and stay in a hotel during the waiting period. Many poor women can't afford this.

Numerous court decisions, and the many different state laws regarding abortion, have left it unclear exactly what the limits are on a woman's right to choose. I believe that clarifying federal legislation is needed to set a clear nationwide standard. That standard should be the standard set forth in Roe v Wade.

For all these reasons, I urge you to do all that is within your power to assure passage of the Freedom of Choice Act in its original form and without amendment.

Yours truly,